

United We Ride Grants
Attn: Bryna Helfer
400 7th Street SW – Room 9114
Washington, DC 20590

November 22, 2005

Dear Ms. Helfer:

Please accept the South Dakota Department of Transportation, Office of Air, Rail and Transit's (SDDOT) proposal for the Federal Transit Administration's State Coordination Grant component for the United We Ride initiative. We respectfully request a planning grant to conduct a comprehensive state assessment using the Framework for Action as well as create a comprehensive state action plan for coordinating human services transportation. South Dakota has not yet applied for a United We Ride grant and thanks you for the opportunity to apply.

While various state agencies have the basic working knowledge of the Framework for Action, it has not been completed for South Dakota. It is our intention to work closely with the South Dakota Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities, and it's Executive Director Shelly Pfaff, to conduct the needs assessment as well as complete the Framework for Action. Our department recognizes the South Dakota Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities (SDCCD) is a natural partner for conducting the needs assessment and we welcome the opportunity to begin.

If further clarification is needed for any section of our submission, please contact Melissa Schofield at (605) 773-7038 or Jackie Mattheis at (605) 773-4169.

1. Briefly describe the state's mission as it relates to coordination of human services transportation.

The mission of our office is visibly related to the coordination effort; the mission is “[to] support, coordinate transit providers so they can provide transit services to meet the needs of elderly, disabled, and the general public”.

We feel the mission for our office also contributes to the overall mission of the South Dakota Department of Transportation, which is, “We provide a transportation system to satisfy diverse mobility needs while retaining concern for safety and the environment.”

Our office selected the mission based on our role in the transit program for South Dakota.

Our office oversees providers who transport the elderly, disabled, low income and general public. We are available to provide technical and financial support to those providers and consider coordination opportunities in existing services areas as well as those planned for expansion.

2. Briefly describe the state's strategy for conducting the Framework for Action or other tool that leads to enhanced dialogue and understanding of current status of coordinated transportation system.

South Dakota's plan for conducting the Framework for Action is to contract with the South Dakota Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities (SDCCD) to gather data and input about our current coordinated transportation system. We will compare our existing system with the Framework for Action and develop a plan to move coordination of

transportation services to a reality. Through the Coalition's channels of resources, our office will gain valuable input and information about the strengths and weaknesses of our existing system. As a DOT, we recognize our access to this information will be strengthened because of the partnership with the SDCCD. We view this strategy as an obvious one; it directly involves two crucial elements of the coordination effort: the human services community and the transportation community.

Through previous meetings, the biggest or most obvious needs have been identified by respective Departments, Divisions, and Programs.

With funds from this grant, it is our intention to build on existing strengths, and work toward mobility for all. It is our expectation that in order to get the best feedback about existing coordination in South Dakota, the SDCCD will travel statewide to personally access their resources and networks. In this manner, a comprehensive state action plan can be developed.

3. Briefly describe how this grant will address and support your plans to develop a comprehensive state action plan for coordinating human service transportation.

The SDDOT has hosted meetings involving other state agencies in the spirit of coordination. The attendees involve Department Secretaries of Social Services, Human Services, Program Administrators and Division Directors for Adult Services and Aging and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, the South Dakota Departments of Health and Labor. The purpose of these meetings has been to identify and address the biggest obstacles facing each respective agency at the state level and brainstorm for solutions. While these meetings will continue, the financial support from and requirements of the

UWR grant will help ensure a comprehensive action plan will be developed in South Dakota.

4. Describe the level of coordination/collaboration with other state agencies and other partners (e.g., providers, consumers, planning entities, private for profit, non-profit organizations, and government).

In March 2005, Easter Seals Project ACTION selected a team from South Dakota consisting of a transit director and assistant director, a city council member, the Personnel Director of an Adjustment Training Center, and an SDDOT representative to meet and participate in the 2005 Mobility Planning Services Institute. With this mix of authorities, the conversations and dialogues presented many opportunities for coordination within two communities. The Project ACTION Program has observed the execution of plans made at the Institute and has expressed their pleasant surprise at the progress made as well as their encouragement to continue. The information received by the 2005 team has been shared statewide with other transit systems through networking and informational meetings. The 2005 team has also expressed the need for and willingness to participate in a pilot project which will develop a toolkit for human services agencies to measure true costs, including intangible costs, of transportation.

A second team from South Dakota has been selected for the upcoming Institute.

Also in 2005, our office was invited to attend a National RTAP training session designed to improve facilitation skills and foster coordination. The goals of the sessions were to build and use negotiation skills, to build facilitation skills, to identify factors of resistance and overcome them, and to identify our roles as a State DOT. The skills and suggestions

have been shared with all transit providers in South Dakota through networking and informational meetings.

Rural Transit Programs in four communities of South Dakota have contracted with Head Start Programs to help meet their transportation needs. Currently there are eight

Title III-B Elderly (only) Transit Systems in South Dakota. The SDDOT has provided capital assistance to each of these systems in the past and invites them each year to apply for capital grants for vehicle acquisition. In some cases, these systems are in very remote areas where public transit services are provided at minimal levels. These systems deliver meals to seniors as well as provide transportation to medical facilities and social appointments.

Currently 19 of 21 rural transit programs in South Dakota receive Title III-B funding.

Since 1991, the SDDOT has agreed with the South Dakota Department of Social Services to administer this funding. All billing for Title III funds for these 19 programs is paid through the SDDOT in addition with FTA funds to its recipients. We actively promote a “better together” attitude and aggressively encourage an atmosphere of shared resources and efforts.

5. Briefly describe how the state action plan will meaningfully involve consumers in the development and implementation of human service transportation planning process.

The SDDOT feels the only way to have a successful action plan is to have the involvement of consumers and strive to meet current needs. By involving agencies and individuals who are active in human services communities, we are confident the

coordination plan can be strengthened and goals can be met. The state action plan will meaningfully involve consumers because the consumers are the reason for rural transit programs. Their needs are those the transit programs strive to meet, and their input can only positively impact a coordinated plan or effort. The initial assessment will target agencies, users, and local leaders in various communities. This assessment will be designed to determine the users' perspective of the effectiveness of current coordination efforts and service levels in addition to identifying opportunities for better service.

6. Briefly describe the plan for coordination/collaboration with the emergency planning efforts in the state regarding transportation for people with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with lower incomes during a natural or man-made disaster.

Described below are existing, not what's planned

The South Dakota Department of Public Safety, Office of Emergency Management is the starting point for South Dakota's emergency planning efforts. This office serves as the central planning agency for emergency planning and provides guidance to local levels when developing their plans. Local levels in South Dakota then create and implement their own emergency management plans which generally include transit providers.

Many of the public transit providers as well as the elderly-only transit programs in South Dakota are involved in their Local Emergency Operation Plans, and in some cases, are involved in more than one local plan due to their service or coverage areas. Generally, the biggest contribution transit providers make to the emergency plans is to make vehicles readily available and dedicated for use in the event of an emergency. Vehicles are equipped to transport elderly and disabled citizens and are registered with local

authorities as to their purposes and the specific characteristics such as passenger loads, wheelchair positions, and if it is a lift-equipped vehicle.

Rural public transit providers are encouraged to be involved in these activities and share their resources, including vehicles equipped to transport the elderly and disabled as well as their communication systems. In South Dakota, transportation providers are part of a unified digital communication system along with fire departments, law enforcement agencies, and other emergency operations participants. Radios were purchased for transit providers for their dispatching uses as well as to carry out the functions of an emergency operation plan. Radios for the transit providers were purchased with state and federal funds and currently, there are approximately 85 radios in transportation vehicles in approximately 30 communities in South Dakota. The idea behind having these radios was for there to be an existing single accessible network of communication in the event of an emergency.

7. Submit a narrative of your proposed project that includes a project timeline with deliverables.

With the funds granted by the UWR planning grant, it is expected that the SDDOT and the SDCCD can complete the Framework for Action within 12 months. The beginning steps of the Framework for Action have taken place, but not all steps have been completed at this time.

It is expected the beginning steps, outlining the travel schedule and creating the survey will take approximately 3 months.

As the travel schedule for personal contacts is created, South Dakota will be entering its winter season, the timeliness of this step takes weather conditions in to consideration. The expected time of travel to make personal contacts can be completed in 4-6 months. In addition to SDCCD conducting these contacts, the SDDOT will be gathering their own specific information from rural transit providers. The SDDOT takes a proactive approach regarding coordination, and within the last year, the SDDOT has required more involvement from transit providers to extend coordination efforts in their areas. These efforts were required, and will continue, to be documented in their capital and operating grant applications and are reviewed and examined at the time our office conducts annual inspections of vehicles and program management as required by the FTA. This step is expected to be the most involved and time-consuming. Completing the Framework for Action will be the step at which the SDDOT and SDCCD will be working closest, comparing findings and feedback while working each of the steps. While perhaps an aggressive schedule, it is our objective to have the Framework for Action completed in 12 months.

8. The proposal must include a budget that includes a line item for each budget category and a budget narrative.

Budget for United We Ride Planning Grant:

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|----------------------|--------------------|
| Creation of Survey | \$ 2,000.00 |
| Needs Assessment | \$ 5,000.00 |
| Framework for Action | \$8,000.00 |
| Telephone | \$ 1,000.00 |
| Mail/Postage | \$ 500.00 |
| Mileage | \$ 7,500.00 |
| Meals | \$ 3,000.00 |
| Lodging | <u>\$ 8,000.00</u> |
| | \$35,000.00 |